
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MEETING MINUTES

3/2/10

The Board of Selectmen met in the Town Hall, Joseph F. Bilotta Meeting Room as scheduled with Thomas Alonzo, Paula Bertram, Steven M. deBettencourt, Thomas Mason, Dave Matthews and Town Manager Kerry Speidel present. Meeting opened at 7:03 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Dave expressed appreciation to the Town Manager and department heads for the budget presentation last week. Also, to the School Superintendent for her presentation on the school's budget. Chair noted that the superintendent will be presenting the school budget tomorrow evening at the School Committee meeting.

Tom A., reminder that the Town Caucus in Monday, March 15th @ Turkey Hill Middle School Cafeteria at 8:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

APPOINTMENTS

1. 7:15 PM – **Milree Keeling, School Regionalization Committee Report** – Introduced the new member of the Regionalization Planning Committee, Brendan Brady to the board. Milree acknowledged the original board that was appointed as well as the school administration that worked with us to develop the report. The board dissolved following the submission of the final report in December 2009 and the money, about \$23,000 was appropriated to fund the regionalization study was returned to the town. Submitted the report on disc and noted that this information is on the regionalization committee website. Reviewed the history of the Regionalization Planning Committee. Town has maintained contracts for 20 years with the Town of Shirley and they informed us that they would only be signing a three year contract with the Town and they were investigating their options of regionalizing. Accordingly, the committee was established by the Town Moderator to investigate the options on regionalizing with the communities of Shirley and Ayer. Noted that each of our communities have projected declining enrollments which will also result in decreasing revenues from the state. These issues forced us to look at whether regionalizing would be a viable and financially option for our communities. The committee of three still exists and they're still waiting to make the decision on whether to investigate further the option of regionalizing. The three committee members from each of the communities formed a board, which Milree chaired, took some time to determine what they were actually trying to achieve. Received support from the Department of Education (DOE) and then had to determine our values as to what we wanted our schools to be, an administrative plan, financial plan, set criteria as to whether a feasible project. What they learned was what we would be setting up as a regional would be equivalent as to what you see with a town, managing in the same way as a town as a core business which would result in a need for a time of transition. Put together a budget for what they thought it would cost for the transition which was pared down to about 1.8 million dollars. There were two sources that they determined they could go to, one was to the individual towns which would have had to passed in all three communities and instead went to the state and unfortunately, with the recession there wasn't money and for that reason they did not bring this to our communities as this was the one piece that they didn't have confidence in our ability to have our communities fund.

Their goal was to channel any savings that may have incurred, between \$600,000 to \$700,000 dollars to have better classroom offerings, the savings would have come from the decrease in the administrative staff and they would have received some reimbursement from the State in the first year for transportation. This information is available within the supportive documents. Also, could have realized savings in the renegotiation of employee contracts, supply contracts etc.

Tom A., questioned the official status.

Per Milree the town has that committee until the town decides to unestablish and she would recommend that as we're not out of the woods, we need to keep our options open. The committee can remain dormant, but still be established. The larger board has been dissolved but our board remains intact with three members.

Tom A., commented that the people he hoped would look at this and noted that the hurdles that they have realized is the State, and that they (state) really needs look at this.

Tom M., questioned how the committee looked at the financial overview.

Milree didn't really perceive that there were huge risks, felt educational capacity was a huge benefit as they would be able to bring more people into the mix, to be able to provide more educational offerings. More high level courses, more variety in middle level courses, more support to students who may be at risk, also the size would give the system more resilience. Projected that we would normalize class sizes throughout the district, financially the opportunity for increased reimbursement, particularly in transportation area. Decrease expenditures on out of area providers for consultant services, we'd have in house professional development. Would have given us better fiscal efficiency as we would be able to retain a reserve, such as you do with a stabilization account.

Steve questioned how did the split happen.

Milree neither community wanted to join us, but down the road the option may avail to us again. Tomorrow night, the School Committee will be discussing our contract with the Town of Shirley as their children are still in our district.

Tom M., noted that all the cuts within the school system really concerns him and afraid that we may be missing out on the education that we should be providing to our children.

Milree shares his concern and noted that we're also cutting into infrastructure which will be very expensive to replace, it's human infrastructure, cultural knowledge. Every cut will have its downstream effect, we do need to do something, how we're going to raise the revenue.

Chair expressed his appreciation to all members of the board.

CURRENT BUSINESS

1. **Minutes** – Board of Selectmen regular and executive session for 2/2/10 reviewed and signed.

Warrants - #18 P10, 3/4/10 - \$627,736.15 and #48 10, 3/2/1 - \$186,655.65 reviewed and signed.

Action File Issues – Chair questioned the board on what they would like to do for the annual town meeting and noted that for the special town meeting it had been recommended to have informal discussions with two members of the Finance Committee, the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen so that information could be brought back to their respective boards to discuss and questioned if this board would like to continue the process.

Dave's understanding was that we were going to continue, they were beneficial and would like to see this continue. Tom M. and Paula agreed. Tom A. willing to serve as is Dave.

2. **Special / Annual Town Meeting Warrant – Open / Close** – Open until and through March 12th @ 12:30 PM, for any warrant articles to be placed on by the board for next week and any others must be submitted by petition.

3. **FY 2011 Budget** – no new information.

4. Manager Updates

- MEMA has requested that communities report to them damage that was incurred in our community during the time period between February 23rd and 27th. DPW Director and Fire Chief are compiling the information to determine if we may be eligible for reimbursement.
- Also on the Muni Relief Package before the legislature there is a provision for an Early Retirement Incentive. Different than what has been offered in past years in that if enacted and the town decides to offer, then the town decides how many will be able to participate and the credit to be allowed would be 3 years, either in age or in service. They are trying to cut salary expense, people retire early and you are limited for how many people go out to backfill, dependent upon the salary of the position being vacated. This does limit the salary that could be offered to fill the position. Kerry has reviewed the data and sent information out to those employees who may qualify to determine if it became an option to recommend it to the Board of Selectmen. Not yet adopted and currently a proposal and the only way it could be enacted in Lunenburg is if the town adopted. This will effect our retirement assessment as the increased benefit that the employee would receive is borne entirely by the town. The retirement system would require you to pay it off within a specified amount of years. In order to be eligible to retire you have to have minimum age of 50 with 20 years of service or 60 with 10 years of service, adding a three either to age or service will not benefit most significantly. This if more for those people who you may see retire within two to three years. Will forward the list to board members and request that it be kept to themselves.
- Announced that the town has been notified that we've been awarded with a Common Cause Massachusetts' 2010 e-Government award for information on our website. Award ceremony is Tuesday, March 16th in Hearing Room A-1 of the State House. Criteria is mostly posting minutes and agenda's did not receive the enhanced category. Kerry has been working with the Chair of the Computer Advisory Committee and he has provided a draft scope of work and hope that at the board's March 16th meeting we'll have a charge and scope for that committee and to have something different up and running.
- Circulated an email to the board last week and have confirmed a workshop with the representatives of Emerald Place, Lakefront Ave., issue and will forward information to the board. They will be bringing a conceptual plan which some members of the board may have already seen.
- Would like to begin the discussion on the PAYT Program next week.
- The DPW Facilities Task Force has been drafting a report for the board and will be discussing with the board at their Tuesday, March 16th in regular session and will be submitting an article for town meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Committee Updates**

- Dave - Capital Planning adjusted the FY11 amount from need requests of, \$779,605 to \$317,785 with no borrowing requests were for the Council on Aging parking lot, radio equipment for the Fire Department (Police/DPW to close the dead spots), police cruiser, school equipment, technology replacement plan and renovations to elementary school rest rooms.
Paula questioned the DPW Facility group has been working and coming up with a proposal and whether there will be a financial impact should we decide to move forward, and would like to be sure that the Capital Planning Committee keeps this in mind.
- Chair noted that the School Committee meets here tomorrow night.
- Paula, recent workshop of the Sewer Commission reviewed the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) and in process of obtaining information from the City of Fitchburg and infrastructure improvements that they are proposing and what the financial ramifications may be. Next scheduled workshop has been scheduled for March. Chair questioned if IMA is something that the Board of Selectmen would approve or Town Meeting. Per Steve believe that this is town meeting and doesn't believe that this will be ready for the spring town meeting, may have available for the fall.
- Chair has been informed that the office did submit the question on the regulations to the ABCC, the one part on the license regulations that we've been questioning, as we've gone this far would like to wait for the ABCC to comment on. Will vote on this on board meeting of March 16th.

2. Special Municipal Employee Designation – Planning Board Consultant – Chair this position that we're talking about designating as Special Municipal Employee is for Planning Board Consultant only. Per Paula, the Chairman of the Planning Board did mention other committees do utilize peer reviews and she did bring this back to the Sewer Commission and at this point that commission is not seeking this status for their peer review and as such this would be specifically for the Planning Board consultant. Dave would like a recap of the Planning Board's decision. Paula informed the board that the Planning Board has discussed this and are well aware of the restrictions and that the Special Municipal Employee will not appear before the board when they are being utilized as a peer review consultant. They are in complete agreement with counsel's final letter of January 12, 2010. Board discussed whether this designation clarifies much, noted that there may be projects that are worked simultaneously. Paula's concern is that we don't make it any more restrictive and by designating this position you are making it less restrictive for them to work within the town. Tom M., the potential conflicts remain and the people have to be aware of it and work around it. Paula motion to designate the position of Planning Board Peer Review as Special Municipal Employee; seconded, voted unanimously. Planning Director, Marion Benson informed the board that the Planning Board is broadening the pool of reviewers that they've been utilizing over the years.

3. Michelle Belleza – Teen Center – tabled.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS / REAPPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

Being no further business board voted unanimously to adjourn Regular Session at 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Williams, Chief Administrative Assistant
Board of Selectmen